



PBL PHOTOGRAPHY

A Message FROM THE DEAN

By Dr. David Graham

It is commonplace to point out that technology is profoundly transforming today's society. In barely three human generations, almost every aspect of our lives has been touched and reshaped. Even setting aside the wonders of the biomedical and

agricultural revolutions that together have extended the lifespan of the great majority of the world's population, the transformations are staggering. We have travelled in little more than a century from a world where few people strayed far from their native village, and then on foot or in a slow conveyance drawn by horses or mules, to a society where it is routine to travel 5 km to shop, 50 km to work, 500 km for a weekend visit and 5,000 km for a brief holiday or business trip. From communications limited in space by the carrying power of the human voice and constrained in time by the slow pace of the transportation needed to carry letters from sender to receiver, we have moved to an "always on" world where we can choose to be accessible to messages from around the globe that arrive moments after being sent.

Technological change is now having a profoundly transformative impact on teaching and learning, and on the academic disciplines that nourish those activities. One example is the work of journalists, such as Ross Perigoe, one of the organizers of the Young Journalists Workshop described in this issue. Fed by a constant stream of images and text from around the world, the practice of journalism has been deeply altered, and the status and authority of professional journalists called radically into question by the constant proliferation of blogs written in the hot aftermath of events by some of those

who experienced them at first hand. Shannon McSheffrey vividly describes how the working life of university teachers has been changed, and how the learning experience of students has been enriched, by the advent of new technologies in the classroom. Through the use of communications technologies, teaching and learning can now take place largely unfettered by the bounds of time and space, so that students with unpredictably scheduled jobs, or who live far from university campuses, can study whenever and wherever they have time. My own field of research has been forever changed by our new ability to make old illustrated books available and accessible to anyone who cares to click a mouse: see <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/> for more of what I mean.

What lies ahead for us in such a world? Prediction is foolhardy, but my own belief is that within a relatively few years, the distinction we draw today between "online" and "offline" will lose much of its force, as the online world meshes with and comes to resemble what we think of as "real life." In such a world, where computer technology is pervasive, communication immediate and fully interactive, and the experience immersive to the point of being indistinguishable from physical reality, the "virtual classroom" will blend more and more with the "real classroom," with both open to anyone, anywhere, anytime. In such a "brave new world," who can tell what new marvels of teaching and learning will arise?

Please note that Dr. David Graham assumed the position of Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs as we were finalizing production of this issue. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Graham. We would also like to welcome Joanne Locke, who assumed the position of Interim Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science on March 1, 2008.

Connections

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The Voice of Concordia University's Faculty of Arts and Science

Young Journalists WORKSHOP

The Excitement was Palpable!

By Ross Perigoe, Associate Professor, Department of Journalism

When you are engaged in the practice of teaching journalism on a daily basis, as I am, it's gratifying to see how excited newcomers get when they see the challenges of the craft up close. Twice this past year the Department of Journalism opened its doors and offered workshops to CEGEP students to introduce them to the responsibility of framing stories for readers, viewers and listeners. Each time, the atmosphere in the workshops was electric.

The most recent initiative was held as part of the University's Open House at the end of January. Our department organized a day-long Young Journalists Workshop, attracting more than 60 students. Last spring, another 43 took the time to "kick the tires" and see what a career in journalism studies involved. The most surprising element? The level of awareness the students had regarding the importance of gathering and sharing information in our society. They asked challenging questions of our faculty – questions about the way news stories are selected; who determines the order of the stories or positions them on the page; and why some stories seem to be given less emphasis than the students felt was appropriate. Having inquiring minds challenge the way things are done created a wonderful opportunity for our faculty to revisit issues that we occasionally take for granted. All in all, an excellent learning experience for students and faculty alike.

This workshop was funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage.



Body centre photos by Nelly Boushy

TEACHING AND THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION



By Dr. Shannon McSheffrey
Chair, Department of History

Compare two scenarios. In 1992, a harried young History professor prepares to deliver a lecture on Gothic cathedrals. She loads her slides into a carousel, borrows a slide projector from the AV depot, lugs the projector and its case up six flights of broken escalators to class, spends 15 minutes before class setting up the slide projector, and discovers when she finally gets the projector to work that she has loaded all the slides in upside down and backwards. Sweating and red-faced, she begins what she had hoped would be a tour-de-force illustrated lecture, but it instead falls flat when the slide projector jams and she has to continue without any slides at all, trying in vain to describe flying buttresses with only her amateurish drawings on the chalkboard.

In 2008, a still-harried and now middle-aged History professor prepares to deliver a lecture on Gothic cathedrals. She has the world of Internet images at her fingertips, easily finds dozens of jpegs of the particular cathedrals she wants to discuss, cuts and pastes the best of them into presentation software, saves

the presentation onto a USB drive, calmly and coolly walks to class, turns on the state-of-the-art computer and LCD projector in the classroom, loads in her presentation and begins to lecture. The projected images on the large screen help the professor explain clearly both the structural and aesthetic aspects of the flying buttress.

Both these scenarios are of course exaggerated – for one thing, the digital revolution has unfortunately not made it any more likely that the Hall Building escalators will work. And equipment failure still happens more often than either instructors or students would wish: I doubt that my students last semester watching me act out the video clip that unaccountably refused to play were any more illuminated than those who failed to understand my drawings of flying buttresses in 1992. But there is no question that the digital revolution we are living through has profoundly changed university lecture halls, and will continue to change them as we work through the implications and possibilities of digital technologies for our teaching methods. Most historians, for instance, have found that our lectures have moved from using images as illustrations for our

main points to employing them as the very centre of analysis. Signet rings, for example, were used by Roman emperors and medieval kings to authenticate the wax seals placed on official documents. A discussion of the words and images on a signet ring – projected onto a large screen in the classroom – can exemplify more meaningfully than a straightforward declarative lecture the complicated relationship between symbolism, authority and force in the establishment of political power. This is not about catering to the “video generation,” but about engaging students’ cognition on multiple levels rather than only through oral description (as powerful a tool as that is).

The shifts in teaching methods enabled and indeed necessitated by the digital revolution continue. Some of my younger colleagues have begun to integrate blogs (interactive discussion forums) and wikis (collaborative and open web page projects) into their teaching, and our “Digital History” courses are among our most popular. Although to the skeptical the use of the Internet in our classes might seem like a gimmick, or even downright dangerous, this ignores the tremendous potential of the new technologies to help teach students to consider historical problems in more sophisticated and rounded ways. This is a brave new digital world, and we will need to continue to think hard about how best to harness its power for our classrooms.

Snapshots

Congratulations to **Dr. Sylvain David**, **Dr. Ollivier Dyens** and **Dr. Sherry Simon**, Department of Études françaises, who were each finalists for prestigious awards in their respective fields. Dr. David was a finalist for the Prix Raymond-Klibansky du meilleur ouvrage de langue française en sciences humaines 2007 for *Cioran. Un héroïsme à rebours*. Dr. Dyens was a finalist for the Prix littéraires de Radio-Canada, section poésie 2007 for *Un millier d'êtres vivants*. Dr. Dyens is also a finalist for the Prix littéraires de Radio-Canada, section poésie 2008 for *Là où dorment les crapauds*. Dr. Simon was a finalist for the Prix Spirale-Eva-Le-Grand 2007, the Prix Raymond-Klibansky du meilleur ouvrage de langue anglaise en sciences humaines 2007, and for the Grand Prix du livre de Montréal 2007.

Dr. Simon Bacon, Department of Exercise Science, was awarded the Canadian Cardiovascular Society New Investigator Award (2nd Runner-up) for his work evaluating the extent to which acute stress influences the endothelium and what physiological pathways might trigger stress-induced changes in endothelial function.

Congratulations to **Dr. Carsten Wrosch**, Department of Psychology, whose paper with Gregory Miller of the University of British Columbia, published in the September issue of the journal *Psychological Science*, caught the attention of the *New York Times Magazine* on Dec. 9. In a study, they found that teenage girls who are unable to disengage themselves from trying to attain hard-to-reach goals exhibited increased levels of the inflammatory molecule C-reactive protein (CRP), which in adults is linked with diabetes, heart disease and early aging.

Dr. Charles Acland, Research Chair in Communication Studies, and **Dr. Catherine Russell**, Director of the Humanities Doctoral Program, are to become the new editors of the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, which will now be housed at Concordia. The *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* is the leading national peer-reviewed publication in moving image studies. Dr. Acland and Dr. Russell put forth the winning bid, which was announced by the Chair of the Editorial Board, Blaine Allen (Queen's University), on December 5, 2007.



Participants in a cross-national study of children's health directed by Dr. William Bukowski of the Department of Psychology show off the school supplies they received as a reward for taking part in this project. The study compares the factors that account for differences in physical and psychological health between lower- and upper-middleclass children in Montreal and in Barranquilla, a city on the Caribbean coast of northern Colombia in Latin America.

Dr. Catherine Laurin, a postdoctoral student working with Dr. Simon Bacon in the Department of Exercise Science, recently obtained a CIHR postdoctoral scholarship from the GENESIS team to assess sex differences in the impact of psychological factors on heart disease.

Congratulations to **Sarah Burns** and **Marie-Douce St-Jacques**, students in the Department of Études françaises, for their recent awards. Sarah Burns, undergraduate student in the translation program, was awarded the Prix du Réseau des traducteurs en éducation. Marie-Douce St-Jacques, graduate student in the MA in Littératures francophones et résonances médiatiques, was awarded the Prix Pierre-et-Yolande Perrault for *L'attente est un piège: La bête lumineuse de Pierre Perrault, de l'image aux viscères*.

Through an initiative of the Department of Theological Studies and in conjunction with the Department of Religion, the **Montreal Area Biblical Colloquium** has been established. The colloquium presently includes faculty members and their graduate students from Université de Montréal, McGill and Concordia.

Congratulations to **Dr. William Byers**, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, whose book *How Mathematicians Think* was chosen by *CHOICE* magazine as one of the 600 or so outstanding academic books for 2007 and one of the 20 outstanding titles from Princeton University Press.

Congratulations to **Dr. Erica Lehrer**, Department of History and Department of Sociology and Anthropology, who was recently awarded a Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) grant for her work using multimedia documentation and curation to enable and investigate the use of public space for representation, dialogue and reconciliation after mass violence.

The Department of **Études françaises** received official status as *Figura antenna*, a UQAM-based research group whose objective is to study the contemporary imagination.

Dr. Jochen Jaeger, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, recently co-authored two articles on landscape fragmentation and urban sprawl that were published in scientific journals. He also acted as guest editor of a special issue of a scientific journal on environmental research. "Comment on 'Roadless Space of the Conterminous United States'" was published in the November 23, 2007, issue of *Science*, vol. 318, no. 5854. "Implementing landscape fragmentation as an indicator in the Swiss Monitoring System of Sustainable Development (MONET)" appeared in the *Journal of Environmental Management* (2008), doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2007.03.043. The special feature titled "Why does environmental research not contribute more substantially to environmental problem solving?" came out over the course of the last two years in *GAIA: Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society*, starting with vol. 15 (2006), iss. 1, and ending with vol. 17 (2008), iss. 1, including 11 contributed papers, an introduction paper and a conclusion paper.



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